



DESIGN
COMMISSION
FOR WALES
COMISIWN
DYLUNIO
CYMRU

Workshop Report

Central Square Masterplan,
Cardiff

Meeting of 3rd February 2014



Declarations of Interest

Panel members, observers and other relevant parties are required to declare *in advance* any interests they may have in relation to the Design Review Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCFW's central records.

Review Status

CONFIDENTIAL

Meeting date	3 rd February 2014
Issue date	18 th February 2014
Scheme location	Cardiff
Scheme description	Masterplan
Scheme reference number	36 (74A)
Planning status	Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

None declared

Consultations to Date

Consultation with the Local Authority has taken place.

The Proposals

The Central Square masterplan aims to develop a vibrant, people orientated, mixed-use development and civic space for the people of Cardiff and visitors to the capital city. The scheme aims to respond to the needs of commuters and citizens as well as the requirement to manage large numbers of people during Millennium Stadium event days.

Management of the city's public transport networks is a key issue for this masterplan, as the site incorporates the current bus station, and is adjacent to Cardiff Central railway station. As well as public realm, the masterplan incorporates buildings for retail, offices, residential and tourist information, with a prominent headquarters planned for the centre of the development.

Development is planned to take place in three phases, the first of which is likely to be the office development, One Central Square, designed by Rio Architects, at the western edge of the masterplan.

Summary

The Commission welcomes the dialogue on master plan proposals for the centre of Cardiff and overall found them extremely promising, representing as they do, the prospect of a valuable contribution to the heart of the Capital City. Although it is at an early stage, the approach is ambitious, with the potential to make a valuable contribution to the city, for residents, the commercial sector and visitors.

The proposals also represent a catalyst for much needed comprehensive and coherent development in city centre. We are overall, supportive of the design approach and it will be important to protect that in the phasing of development and delivery, in order to ensure a high quality benchmark for the city.

- The desire and ambition demonstrated by this masterplan to improve and develop this key area at the heart of the city is extremely welcome.
- The background information regarding traffic, transport and phasing is useful in understanding the evolution of the masterplan, however the pedestrian movement diagrams are at stage unconvincing. Some strategic decisions about transport are yet to be resolved and the Commission has concerns about the necessity to ensure that an ambitious and new public frontage, engaged with the city, will be provided for users of the railway station. There is a danger that transferring all public transport south of the rail lines, will result in the north side becoming secondary. Links between the two sides are important and should be thoroughly investigated.
- The southern end of the Marland House site will be important to the success of the development. This area of the masterplan is so far less resolved than others, but will impact the connections and routes to the rest of the city centre and warrants greater attention.
- Crowd management and flow of people to and from the stadium are crucial considerations for this scheme and must be balanced with considerations for the residents and citizens of Cardiff. The masterplan should seek to appropriately help control this without the use (and storage) of temporary barriers.
- The alignment and nature of the streets at the north east of the site need to be carefully considered taking into account traffic and pedestrian crossings. Some further work here, potentially outside the designated site area, may be required.
- The student residential block and associated open space to the north of the site needs further consideration. The width of the streets and the use of the open space should be re-planned to avoid dark, unwelcoming or problematic spaces.
- The visitor centre should be part of a larger block, rather than a free standing smaller element.
- The development should be planned to ensure that the retail elements are as viable as possible, based on accurate movement patterns, pedestrian desire lines, visibility and market requirements.
- The size of the proposed main public space at the station entrance was well considered and appropriate, although enclosure of the space at the edges needs further consideration.
- The width and function of each of the streets within the site warrant further detailed consideration.
- At the next level of design detail, a materials palette, street furniture, lighting and planting should be developed, including consideration of where these should continue the Hayes and St David's II pattern and where and why they depart from it.

Main Points in Detail

Transport and Infrastructure

This scheme provides the opportunity to tackle some very important strategic issues about how Cardiff's primary traffic interchange should work with the city. This will be of primary concern to the city Council which must use every effort to achieve the best solution for the city.

There is a desire to create a new integrated transport hub, incorporating Cardiff Central railway station, a new bus interchange and taxi ranks. The location for the bus interchange is beyond the control of the team producing this masterplan. However, the team and Council's preferred location would be the land directly to the south of the station, leaving the masterplan area to the north free for a civic space which can manage pedestrian flows on busy match days, and allowing good pedestrian links with the city centre to the north and east. The Design Commission agrees that this solution would be of most benefit to the city as a whole, and would enable better public transport management. The Commission was pleased to hear that there is a fall-back option for the bus interchange at the east of the site, should the preferred option not be possible.

Making the new transport interchange south of the station a successfully integrated piece of urban design will be a major challenge for all stakeholders, including Network Rail. Full commitment from Cardiff Council to deliver a first class transport interchange is essential – the council will have leverage through the delivery and operation of bus interchange. Car pickup and drop off, car parking, cycling and pedestrians must be considered as thoroughly as the new bus facilities.

If the interchange focus proves to be south of the railway station, the station should have a substantial civic and architectural presence to the south. From what we understand of the current changes to the station this may not have been properly considered to date. This leaves the status of the listed northern entrance, and how many passengers may use it somewhat unclear. Cardiff City, Network Rail and the developers for this site will need to work together to understand the impact of changes to the station to ensure that the proposed station square has the purpose and activity needed for its success.

In order to successfully resolve the urban design, it is important that accurate transport user data is available and analysed. It is crucial to know what percentage of passengers arriving or departing by rail use the various forms of connecting travel, so that interchange and urban design can be thoroughly integrated. There also needs to be an understanding of ambitions and predictions for long term changes in transport mode use.

Management of spectator flow to and from the stadium on match days still needs more cooperation between stakeholders. Stadium and rail operators, as well as Cardiff Council and the developers must work together. Any measures which would reduce the need for queuing and provide better transport information should be discussed, and the need for a single management company responsible for the public space should be considered. Ideally, the flow of people should be controlled without the need for railings and barriers. The team could look at the ArenA Stadium Amsterdam and its adjoining Bijlmer Station for useful precedent.

From a sustainability point of view, it would be ideal if private car driving could be discouraged by providing fewer parking spaces within the commercial development. Therefore, the amount of car parking to provide is a difficult issue to resolve.

Any opportunities for 'unpaid' pedestrian links between the two sides of the railway station should be investigated by the developer, Network Rail and Cardiff Council. This would improve links to the south of the city and Cardiff Bay.

The travel strategies should provide for and encourage cycling. Measures should include safe routes, secure parking and ease of access to the station and platforms.

Places and Public Realm

The design of the public realm and buildings' form will influence people's choice of routes, from the railway station to the rest of the city. The route to St Mary Street should be reinforced with the use of active frontages to prevent this existing street becoming a dead space. The crossing at the junction of St Mary Street and Wood Street is particularly important to the flow of pedestrian traffic.

There was some discussion about the alignment of the streets to the north east of the site to address desire lines. It was concluded that the alignment should continue to match the existing rectilinear grain of the local streets, but that the design of building corners should be carefully considered to encourage and support pedestrian movement to and from the retail centre.

The Marland House block to the east of the square needs further consideration, though its planning has been delayed by a number of uncertainties. This block must define and enclose the eastern edge of the station square.

There is a danger that the 'Stadium Square' at the north of the masterplan will be a dead space on non-match days, and it needs further work. Creating a pleasant, well-used space here is a challenge, especially given its proximity to the Station Square. Perhaps it would work better as private garden for the residential block which is still visible to the public.

The desire to maximise active frontages on to public routes and spaces is welcomed. Encouraging people to leave their offices during the day and increasing visibility into buildings will help with this. Blank elevations at ground level should be minimised.

All of the streets and public routes need to be thought about in more detail. The nature and character of each of them should be considered. Scale, proportion, surface treatment, building uses and traffic will all have an impact on this. Inhabited section drawings through each of the routes at different places, and perspective views from street level will help progress this aspect of the proposals.

The use of the Station Square space needs to be thought about in more detail. It will need to accommodate large volumes of people on match days, but there are suggestions that it might be used for other activities throughout the year. These things will influence how the space is furnished and detailed. The Commission's view is that this has the potential to be an important civic space for the city and other places within the

development may be better locations for temporary activities and events, potentially bringing public activity to areas that can only work as 'destinations.'

The materials, street furniture, lighting and landscape design used in the public spaces will have an impact on its quality. These need to be given more consideration as the masterplan design progresses. Good quality detailing of the Station Square will be important in making this large space work.

Wind modelling is being undertaken. This will help the team design comfortable outdoor spaces.

Buildings

The first building to be delivered must set a high quality standard for the rest of the development, and has the opportunity to add value to this important strategic site.

The heights of the buildings are not yet fully defined. They are being set in response to commercial demand and studies exploring solar access to public spaces, and will step down towards the listed station building.

The visitor centre building might work better if it becomes part of the larger adjacent building with other uses. A taller building would strengthen the edge of the public space.

Any opportunities to improve the station building frontage to make it more active should be explored.

Future Engagement

The Design Commission would welcome future engagement on this masterplan as it progresses, as well review of each of the individual building phases. The opportunity to engage with the designers, developer and Local Authority at this early stage means that there is opportunity for discussions to influence the design and add value.

Phasing diagrams would be useful to explain how the masterplan will develop over the coming years. There will obviously need to be some flexibility in the phasing to allow for market changes, but there should be commitment to fundamental design principles.

DCFW is a Welsh Government Sponsored body (WGSB), a non-statutory consultee, private limited company, and wholly controlled subsidiary of the Welsh Government. The comment recorded in this report, arising from formal Design Review through our Design Review Service, is provided in the public interest for the consideration of local planning authorities as a material consideration, and other users of the Design Review Service. It is not and should not be considered 'advice' and no third party is bound or required to act upon it. The Design Review Service is delivered in line with DCFW's published protocols, code of conduct and complaints procedure, which should be read and considered by users of the service.

A Welsh language copy of this report is available upon request.

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Paul McCarthy, Rightacres
Architectural/Urban Designer:	Foster & Partners: Toby Blunt, Partner Bruno Moser, Head of Urban Design Adam Newburn, Associate Architect
Local Authority:	Claire Moggridge, Cardiff Council Nigel Hanson, Cardiff Council Lawrence Dowdall, Cardiff Council Tim Levenson, Major Projects, Cardiff Council
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Alan Francis
Lead Panellist	Ewan Jones Michael Griffiths John Punter Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW
Observing:	Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive, DCFW